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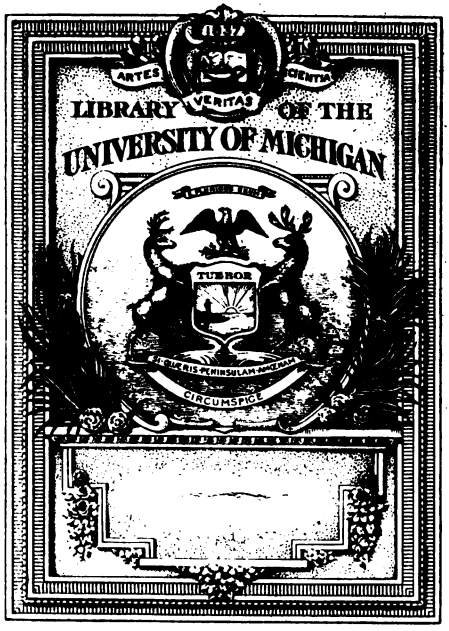
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THE CONTEMPLATIVE QUARRY

and

THE MAN WITH A HAMMER

by

ANNA WICKHAM

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
LOUIS UNTERMEYER

NEW YORK
HARCOURT, BRACE AND COMPANY
1921

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INTRODUCTION

WOMAN, as Meredith remarked, will be the last creature tamed by man. To-day, as in the time of the Cro-Magnard cave-dweller, this rebellious companion, half-animal, half-angel, crouches within his walls and remains aloof from them. She disdains even to understand what seem to be the terms of her captivity. The simple captor, in a rush of generosity, makes his quarry the half-willing partner of his house, his heart, his every trivial thought. And he is baffled because this strange being, after accepting his world, possesses still another universe she does not share with him. He holds her and yet she does not seem wholly his; he chains her in iron facts and, in ever-new fantasies, she escapes him. The quarry is too contemplative to be wholly caught.

There is something, he thinks, unnatural in this lack of self-revelation. It suddenly occurs to him that even when woman has turned singer, she has refused to reveal herself. With amazingly few exceptions, all the poetry written by the Christina Rossettis, the Elizabeth Brownings, the Laurence Hopes, the Sara Teasdales, expresses the masculine rather than the feminine attitude to the sex. It is impossible to say whether an ancient inhibi-

tion or a contemptuous pride has kept her silent, or whether a more conscious desire to flatter has impelled practically every woman lyricist to picture her soul as man has always portrayed it. "Our lords and lovers imagine us to be thus and so," they seem to say, "let then our songs declare we are truly thus and so." Such an attitude—and it may be a half-despairing, half-disdainful one—accounts for the amazing similarities and sentimental choruses. The traditional gestures, the reticences, the evasive delicacies are the properties that screen a hundred fierce differences—even the inflections have a false sameness. One realizes, with abrupt surprise, that what few glimpses poetry has had of the multiplex, unadjusted spirit of woman have been given by men: Euripides understood her variously burning heart better than the passionate Sappho; the restrained Meredith tells us more than the rhapsodic Mrs. Browning.

If it is true that the masculine monopoly of creative, critical and interpretative force is chiefly due to his range and liberty of experience, and if it is equally true that woman's minor position in the arts is largely due to her lack of freedom for free discussion or action, one sees signs of a new order. These manifestations are portents rather than performances. But already a small and widely-scattered group of women are taking stock of themselves—appraising their limitations, inventions and energies without a thought of man's contempt or condescension. Searchers like May Sinclair, Virginia

Woolf, Rebecca West, Willa Cather and Dorothy Richardson are working in a prose that illuminates their experiments. In poetry, a regiment of young women are recording an even more rigorous self-examination. The most typical and, in many ways, the best of these seekers and singers is Anna Wickham.

Anna Wickham is a young Englishwoman who has written almost ten times as much as she has published. Her first venture, a book of forty small pages, is a vivid, fully-developed confessional of modernity; the subsequent poetry is more restrained but even richer. The most casual reading—if such a thing were possible—of Mrs. Wickham's work reveals the strength of her candor, the intense singleness of her purpose. The opening lines of the first poem in " The Contemplative Quarry " strike the key of her book with its acid overtones of irony:

She: What shall I do, most pleasing man?
I will delight you if I can.
Shall I be silent? Shall I speak?
Since I love quick, I'll show that I am weak:
I'll say the wisest strangest thing I know
That you may smile at vanity, and love me so.

He: How can her wisdom flourish and endure
When her philosophy is but a lure,
And to the arsenal of charm is brought
The ammunition of her thought?
I count her breathing as I sit;
I love her mouth, but disregard her wit.

The poems that follow could scarcely be put in the category of "pleasant" or "charming" verse; they are not what another poet has called "pretty tunes of coddled ills," these are no "songs for an idle lute." They are astringent and sometimes harsh; gnarled frequently in their own perturbations. This does not mean that Mrs. Wickham is never a verbal musician. True, she is not one of those lyricists who win us with the magic of lines that tap their feet in an even measure, with words that clap hands and kiss in a ring of rhyme, with images breathing their unforgettable last syllables in a dying cadence. There is little music for its own sake here. But, beneath her epigrammatic ironies, this psychologist can sing. Even her wild angers and querulous revulsions cannot choke the lyric impulse. The musician triumphs in the melodic order of poems like "The Tired Man," "Divorce," "The Cherry-Blossom Wand" (with its evocation of Yeats) and this direct, simple-moving

SONG

I was so chill and overworn and sad,
To be a lady was the only joy I had.
I walked the street as silent as a mouse,
Buying fine clothes, and fittings for the house.

But since I saw my love,
I wear a simple dress,
And happily I move,
Forgetting weariness.

Such a poem is, in the sternest way, "natural" without being in the least ingenuous. Mrs. Wickham, with all her yielding to the unconscious, is never submerged by it. Nor is this poetry unaware of its burdens; time and again it beats at the bars of limitations far greater than those of form. It is critical of itself, almost denunciatory. Even fragments of poems devoted to the search for loveliness reveal such self-analysis.

> The tumult of a fretted mind
> Gives me expression of a kind;
> But it is faulty, harsh, not plain—
> My work has the incompetence of pain.

So Mrs. Wickham's spirit burns and twists in the flame of her passionate appeal:

> God send us power to make decision
> With muscular, clean, fierce precision.

But does precision satisfy her? On the contrary, she writhes beneath it. Torn between her desire for perfection and her distrust of it, she typifies the woman of to-day who has repudiated the old order and is, as yet, pitifully unadjusted to a new one.

> I desire Virtue, though I love her not—
> I have no faith in her when she is got. . .

> My silly sins I take for my heart's ease
> And know my beauty in the end disease.

Her very mercurial temperament is representative of the nervous spirit of her age; mood follows mood with abrupt intensity. She is, in quick succession, burning hot and icy cold; she is driven from fiery antagonisms to smouldering apathy; she is acutely sensitive, restless, harassed. In one of her early poems she sums up the impulse and fervor of this poetry. In a sort of half-defiant apologia she writes:

> If I had peace to sit and sing,
> Then I could make a lovely thing;
> But I am stung with goads and whips,
> So I build songs like iron ships.
>
> Let it be something for my song,
> If it is sometimes swift and strong.

There are more than a few hints in these lines of the eventual freedom of women. And this promise of liberty instead of causing fresh jubilations brings only fresh questions. Woman is being freed—for what? Is she to be liberated only to be caught up in new entanglements? Free for larger discontents? For a more relentless fury in the sex-duel? She hesitates. She realizes that it is not possible to live long on a fight. She has dreams of peace even in the midst of battle. . . .

Thus the fluctuating thoughts of Anna Wickham. And so, for the greater part, her poems present the drama of woman struggling between what is difficult to repudiate and what is still more difficult to accept.

Here we see her torn between dreams and domesticity, between being the instrument of love and love itself; making, with a wry determination, some sort of compromise between the conflicting claims of modernity and maternity. A dozen poems develop this theme with rich variations. Witness the tense passion in "The Revolt of Wives," the restrained power of "The Free Woman," the livelier satire in "Eugenics," "The Slighted Lady" and the bitter humor of "Definition," "Nervous Prostration" and "The Individualist."

This is Woman—avid for all the panaceas and distrustful of them all. A Feminist—and even Feminism does not satisfy her. There still is the stubborn fact of inferiority—self-imposed as well as forced upon her—and the great desire to maintain a persistent individuality clashes with the deeper desire to give all of self completely. For the moment, she turns upon herself and, angry though she is at the women who grow old with being "passionate about pins, and pence, and soap," she becomes even more impatient at the complacency of certain schools of thought. Thus in the caustic "The Affinity," she begins:

> I have to thank God I'm a woman
> For in these ordered days a woman only
> Is free to be very hungry, very lonely.

And, in another key, feminism is discarded for femininity; through the mouthpiece of "The Shrew" she can say:

You wish, O master of my destiny,
That I control myself.
'Twere better you ruled me.
For if I rule myself, I smile at you, and hate.
If you rule me, I love you though I curse, O mate!

In this poetry one receives, through the vision of woman in rebellion, the sharp activity of modern art. Not only do the æsthetic agitations find their echo in snatches like

Only a starveling singer seeks
The stuff of songs among the Greeks. . . .

These are new waters and a new Humanity;
For all old myths give us the dream to be. . . .

But iconoclasm has been equally stimulated so that it moves with a definitely religious energy.

Thank God for war and fire
To burn the silly objects of desire,
That from the ruin of a church thrown down
We see God clear and high above the town.

Out of all those poems, even the most lyrical ones, rises the cry of the solitary soul that is no less solitary for being the protagonist of a sex. It cries to placid women as well as to complacent men: "Show us the contract plain!"

We, vital women, are no more content
Bound, first to passion, then to sentiment.
Of you, the masters, slaves in our poor eyes
Who most are moved by women's tricks and lies,
We ask our freedom. In good sooth,
We only ask to know and speak the truth!

"We only ask to know and speak the truth." A tremendous demand screened by that deprecating "only"! But it is because of such determinations that truth—or an approach to it—will be a little easier for lovers, comrades, women and men. It will not only be the quarry that will have something splendid to contemplate.

LOUIS UNTERMEYER.

NEW YORK CITY,
January, 1921.

A NOTE ON METHOD

HERE is no sacramental *I*.
Here are more I's than yet were in one human.
Here I reveal our common mystery—
I give you "Woman."
Let it be known for our old world's relief,
I give you woman—and my method's brief!

THE CONTEMPLATIVE QUARRY

I

AMOURETTE

(The Woman and the Philosopher)

She: WHAT shall I do, most pleasing man?
I will delight you if I can.
Shall I be silent? Shall I speak?
Since I love quick, I'll show that I am weak:
I'll say the wisest strangest thing I know
That you may smile at vanity, and love me so.

He: How can her wisdom flourish and endure
When her philosophy is but a lure,
And to the arsenal of charm is brought
The ammunition of her thought?
I count her breathing as I sit;
I love her mouth, but disregard her wit.

She: More than love, and more than other pleasure
I desire thrilling combat of the wit.
As far as I can measure
This man is rare, and therefore fit
To be a combatant. Let me say one thing new
That I may gage him so, to prove my judgment
true.

(*Here follows an argument.*)

She: Sir, it is just I own
That I am overthrown,
And I take strange delight
That I am beaten so to-night.

He: Madam, you are a sensualist,
And, being such, you shall be kissed.

She: What husbandry is this?
What thrift, that we should kiss
On the first night we meet?
What is your need to eat the seed,
When growth might be so sweet?
From this first pleasure that you sow in me
It is my power to raise a gracious tree.
And, maybe, I will give you a kind grove
Where you may sit through sunny days, and love.

He: This answer, which is rare,
Is luring as your hair.
I go from you this night in pain,
But, Madam, I will come again.

She: Dreams, dreams, stay with me till I sleep,
Then let oblivion steep
My senses in forgetfulness,
That when I wake, I may forget my loneliness.

THE SINGER

If I had peace to sit and sing,
Then I could make a lovely thing;
But I am stung with goads and whips,
So I build songs like iron ships.

Let it be something for my song,
If it is sometimes swift and strong.

REALITY

Only a starveling singer seeks
The stuff of songs among the Greeks.
Juno is old,
Jove's loves are cold,
Tales over-told.
By a new risen Attic stream,
A mortal singer dreamed a dream.
Fixed he not Fancy's habitation,
Nor set in bonds Imagination.
There are new waters, and a new Humanity.
For all old myths give us the dream to be.

We are outwearied with Persephone,
Rather than her, we'll sing Reality.

THE EGOIST

SHALL I write pretty poetry
Controlled by ordered sense in me
With an old choice of figure and of word,
So call my soul a nesting bird?

Of the dead poets I can make a synthesis,
And learn poetic form that in them is;
But I will use the figure that is real
For me, the figure that I feel.

And now of this matter of ear-perfect rhyme,
My clerk can list all language in his leisure time;
A faulty rhyme may be a well-placed microtone,
And hold a perfect imperfection of its own.

A poet rediscovers all creation;
His instinct gives him beauty, which is sensed relation.
It was as fit for one man's thoughts to trot in iambs, as it is for me,
Who live not in the horse-age, but in the day of aeroplanes, to write my rhythms free.

TORTURED MATTER

I HAVE no physical need of a chair;
I can double my body anywhere:
A suitable rest is found
Upon a stone or on the ground.
But it is needful that I feed my wit,
With beauty and complexity, even when I sit.
Had I a splendid broad philosophy,
I were high man without complexity.
I'd fling myself on any natural sod
To scan the zenith and remember God.
But it is needful man shall strive
With tortured matter, so to keep alive.
Idle man would never live to age:
He would run mad and die in rage.
When fat accumulations cloy,
War brings her sword to ravage and destroy,
That through the smoke of the consuming real
Man sees a clearer and more sure ideal.

THE HERMIT

Fools drove him with goads and whips
Down to the sea where there were ships.
And he was forced at the risk of his neck
To find a refuge on a stranger's deck.

Then that ship sailed away
Far from the land that day,
He watched the sky, and mourned to be
In such a dread captivity.

But from a rift of flying cloud
Burst a tempest quick and loud;
A burning bolt struck the strange deck
Bringing the ship to sudden wreck.

So the poor slave swam free
Over a quick calmed sea:
On a new coast-line he was thrown,
And claimed a virgin island for his own.

In the quiet island was such pleasure,
In solitude he found such treasure,
He took rude tools
And carved a splendid monument to fools.

THE CHERRY-BLOSSOM WAND

(*To be sung*)

I WILL pluck from my tree a cherry-blossom wand,
And carry it in my merciless hand,
So I will drive you, so bewitch your eyes,
With a beautiful thing that can never grow wise.

Light are the petals that fall from the bough,
And lighter the love that I offer you now;
In a spring day shall the tale be told
Of the beautiful things that will never grow old.

The blossoms shall fall in the night wind,
And I will leave you so, to be kind:
Eternal in beauty are short-lived flowers,
Eternal in beauty, these exquisite hours.

I will pluck from my tree a cherry-blossom wand,
And carry it in my merciless hand,
So I will drive you, so bewitch your eyes,
What a beautiful thing that shall never grow wise.

A SONG OF MORNING

THE starved priest must stay in his cold hills.
How can he walk in vineyards,
Where brown girls mock him
With kisses, and with the dance!
You, O son of Silenus, must live in cities,
Where there is wine,
Where there are couches for rank flesh,
Where women walk in streets.

But I will be a conqueror,
Strong to starve and feast.
I will go up into the hills.
With club and flint I will fight hairy men.
I will break a head as I throw down a cup;
I will spill my blood as I throw down wine
at a feast;
I will break mountain ice for my bath;
I will lie upon cold rock, and I will dream.

Then I will come down into the cities,
Slim, but for my great sinews.

And I will walk in the streets of women.
The women will be behind their curtains,
And they will fear me.

I will be strong to live beyond the law;
I will be strong to live without the priest;
I will be strong, no slave of couches.

I will be a conqueror,
Mighty to starve and feast.

SOUL'S LIBERTY

He who has lost soul's liberty
Concerns himself for ever with his property,
As, when the folk have lost both dance and song,
Women clean useless pots the whole day long.

Thank God for war and fire
To burn the silly objects of desire,
That from the ruin of a church thrown down
We see God clear and high above the town.

MEDITATION AT KEW

ALAS! for all the pretty women who marry dull men,
Go into the suburbs and never come out again,
Who lose their pretty faces, and dim their pretty eyes,
Because no one has skill or courage to organize.

What do these pretty women suffer when they marry?
They bear a boy who is like Uncle Harry,
A girl, who is like Aunt Eliza, and not new,
These old, dull races must breed true.

I would enclose a common in the sun,
And let the young wives out to laugh and run;
I would steal their dull clothes and go away,
And leave the pretty naked things to play.

Then I would make a contract with hard Fate
That they see all the men in the world and choose a mate,
And I would summon all the pipers in the town
That they dance with Love at a feast, and dance him down.

From the gay unions of choice
We'd have a race of splendid beauty, and of thrilling voice.
The World whips frank, gay love with rods,
But frankly gaily shall we get the gods.

SONG TO THE YOUNG JOHN

THE apple-blossomy king
Is lord of this new Spring;
He is the spirit of young joy,
My little yellow-headed boy.

* * *

His eyes are a bluebell wood, set in a boy's head.
His hair the white-gold ghost of sunlight from Springs
dead.
The pink of apple-blossom is in his bonnie cheeks;
I hear bird-song in sleepy glades, when the king speaks.

He moves like a young larch in a light wind;
His body brings slim budding trees to mind.
How all my senses thrill to the dear treasure,
Till I must weep for sweet excess of pleasure.

THE apple-blossomy king
Is lord of this new Spring;
He is the spirit of young joy,
My little yellow-headed boy.

THE AFFINITY

I like this.

I HAVE to thank God I'm a woman,
For in these ordered days a woman only
Is free to be very hungry, very lonely.

It is sad for Feminism, but still clear
That man, more often than woman, is a pioneer.
If I would confide a new thought,
First to a man must it be brought.

Now, for our sins, it is my bitter fate
That such a man wills soon to be my mate,
And so of friendship is quick end:
When I have gained a love I lose a friend.

It is well within the order of things
That man should listen when his mate sings;
But the true male never yet walked
Who liked to listen when his mate talked.

I would be married to a full man,
As would all women since the world began;
But from a wealth of living I have proved
I must be silent, if I would be loved.

Now of my silence I have much wealth,
I have to do my thinking all by stealth.
My thought may never see the day;
My mind is like a catacomb where early Christians
pray.

(How true

And of my silence I have much pain,
But of these pangs I have great gain;
For I must take to drugs or drink,
Or I must write the things I think.

If my sex would let me speak,
I would be very lazy and most weak;
I should speak only, and the things I spoke
Would fill the air a while, and clear like smoke.

The things I think now I write down,
And some day I will show them to the Town.
When I am sad I make thought clear;
I can re-read it all next year.

I have to thank God I'm a woman,
For in these ordered days a woman only
Is free to be very hungry, very lonely.

THE CONTEMPLATIVE QUARRY

My Love is male and proper-man
And what he'd have he'd get by chase,
So I must cheat as women can
And keep my love from off my face.
'Tis folly to my dawning, thrifty thought
That I must run, who in the end am caught.

SPOKEN TO ADONIS

HAVE you observed that one can measure
Poetic worth of words in terms of pleasure?
Honey and milk have been sweet food so long,
These words are naturalized in Song.
And from my joy in you the time is ripe
That I find lyric value for your pipe.
What tender pleasure do your lips invoke,
Moving in gracious meditation as you smoke!

THE MUMMER

STRICT I walk my ordered way
Through the strait and duteous day;
The hours are nuns that summon me
To offices of huswifry.
Cups and cupboards, flagons, food
Are things of my solicitude.
No elfin Folly haply strays
Down my precise and well-swept ways.

When that compassionate lady Night
Shuts out a prison from my sight,
With other thrift I turn a key
Of the old chest of Memory.
And in my spacious dreams unfold
A flimsy stuff of green and gold,
And walk and wander in the dress
Of old delights, and tenderness.

THE MARRIAGE

WHAT a great battle you and I have fought!
A fight of sticks and whips and swords,
A one-armed combat,
For each held the left hand pressed close to the heart,
To save the caskets from assault.

How tenderly we guarded them;
I would keep mine and still have yours,
And you held fast to yours and coveted mine.
Could we have dropt the caskets
We would have thrown down weapons
And been at each other like apes,
Scratching, biting, hugging
In exasperation.

What a fight!
Thank God that I was strong as you,
And you, though not my master, were my match.
How we panted; we grew dizzy with rage.
We forgot everything but the fight and love of the caskets.
These we called by great names—
Personality, Liberty, Individuality.

Each fought for right to keep himself a slave
And to redeem his fellow.
How can this be done?

But the fight ended.
For both was victory;
For both there was defeat.
Through blood we saw the caskets on the floor.
Our jewels were revealed:
An ugly toad is mine,
While yours was filled with most contemptible,
small snakes.
One held my vanity, the other held your sloth.

The fight is over, and our eyes are clear.—
Good friend, shake hands.

ARTIFICIALITY

Poor body that was crushed in stays,
Through many real-seeming days,
You are free in the grave.
You held a ghost 'neath roof and law
Well by contrivance and by wit and saw.
All storms that rage now strike your mould,
Now dead, now low, now cold;
And air, turned foe, your ready breath forgot,
Shall wanton with you till you rot.

Poor bodies crushed in stays,
Think of the rotting days!

SHIP NEAR SHOALS

I HAVE been so misused by chaste men with one wife
That I would live with satyrs all my life.
Virtue has bound me with such infamy
That I must fly where Love himself is free,
And know all vice but that small vice of dignity.

Come Rags and Jades! so long as you have laughter,
Blow your shrill pipes, and I will follow after.

THE REVOLT OF WIVES

I WILL be neither man nor woman,
I will be just a human.
When the time comes for me to bear a son,
With concentration shall the work be done.
My medium then is flesh and blood,
And by God's mercy shall the work be good.

If all of women's life were spent with child,
How were Earth's people and her area reconciled?
Nor for my very pleasure will I vex
My whole long life away in things of sex,
As in those good Victorian days
When teeming women lived in stays.

We often find the moralist forgetting
Relation betwixt bearing and begetting.
What increase if all women should be chaste?
But it is good all women keep a natural waist,
For a strong people's love of child
With narrow hips can not be reconciled.

Show us the contract plain, that we may prove
If we are loved for children, or are loved for love.
Your children all our services compel,
But from love's charter do we now rebel.
If in our love you find such pleasure,
Pay us in freedom love's full measure.

We, vital women, are no more content
Bound, first to passion, then to sentiment.
Of you, the masters, slaves in our poor eyes
Who most are moved by women's tricks and lies,
We ask our freedom. In good sooth,
We only ask to know and speak the truth!

THE FREE WOMAN

WHAT was not done on earth by incapacity
Of old, was promised for the life to be.
But I will build a heaven which shall prove
A lovelier paradise
To your brave mortal eyes
Than the eternal tranquil promise of the Good.
For freedom I will give perfected love,
For which you shall not pay in shelter or in food.
For the work of my head and hands I will be paid,
But I take no fee to be wedded, or to remain a maid.

FROM POETS, WORKMEN, WOMEN, AND CHILDREN IN ORPHANAGES

WITH wine or with faith, with love or with song,
Let me be drunken all my life long.
On hills of ecstasy, in troughs of pain,
Never more sober, never more sane.
For I lived too long in a den
Of sane and solemn men,
Each merciless as a beast,
And my spirit was their feast.
They sucked my soul from me
All for the sake of holy Uniformity.

THE FAITHFUL AMORIST

Am I not the lover of Beauty
To follow her where I know she is hid
By the aroma of her pleasure?
Yesterday I had pleasure of Helen,
Of white, of yellow hair,
But to-day a negress is my delight,
And Beauty is black.

There are some that are as small tradesmen,
To sell beauty in a shop,
Noting what has been desired, and acclaiming it
    eternally good.
So poets fill verses
For ever with the owl, the oak, and the nightingale,
I say the crow is a better bird than the nightingale,
Since to-day Beauty is black.

The lark sings flat
Of wearisome trees and spiritless fields,
But there is great music in the hyæna,
For there is pleasure in deserts.

TO A YOUNG BOY

Poor son of strife—
Child of inequality and growth—
You will never learn; you have only to live.
You will never know the peace of order,
Routine will crush you.
Safe toil has always thought of time,
But you will work in utter concentration,
Fierce as fire.

You will find no steady excellence:
You will spend your life in a ditch, grubbing for grains of gold.
Remember, my dear son,
That gold is gold.

You will find no steady virtue:
You will live sometimes with holy ecstasy, sometimes with shoddy sin.
You will keep no constant faith,
But with an agony of faithful longing you will hate a lie.

Life will give you no annuity,
You will always be at risk.
There is one technique, one hope and one excuse for such as you,
And that is courage.

EUGENICS

In this woman, whose business it is to prepare my dinner,
I find the most surprising sensitiveness to works of art,
With splendid qualities of sympathy and heart,
And now I learn her father was a sinner.

His lines were laid in unadventurous places;
He was a tradesman in a little town.
But whiles, he laid the yardstick down
And went and lost his money at the races.

The draper had his quiver very full:
At the thought of his thriftlessness my heart should harden.
But had he lived and died like a churchwarden,
I know my housekeeper had been dull.

SEHNSUCHT

Because of body's hunger are we born,
And by contriving hunger are we fed;
Because of hunger is our work well done,
As so are songs well sung, and things well said.
Desire and longing are the whips of God—
God save us all from death when we are fed.

GENUFLECTION

I MOST offend my Deity when I kneel;
I have no profit from repeated prayers.
I know the law too perfect and too real
To swerve or falter for my small affairs.
Not till my ruinous fears begin
Do I ask God for freedom from my sin.
Self-fear is chiefest ally of the Devil,
And I fall straight from praying into evil.

COMMENT

THE spirit of Mediocrity
Is, as the ant, conservative,
And this is as it well must be,
Else were the creature not alive.

The weakling clings to the paps of the Past,
Draws that assurèd necessary food.
Young Power is strong to make a fast
Within a sparsely-berried wood.

Wherein, as Time and clearances allow,
He'll tether a most fruitful milky cow,
From which all following Mediocrity
Will draw its strength to praise Rigidity.

THE DULL ENTERTAINMENT

HERE is too much food
For the talk to be good,
And too much hurrying of menial feet,
And too kind proffering of things to eat.

CHOICE

No sleepy poison is more strong to kill
Than jaded, weak, and vacillating will.
God send us power to make decision
With muscular, clean, fierce precision.
In life and song
Give us the might
To dare to be wrong
Who feared we were not right.
Regenerating days begin
When I, who made no choice, choose even sin.

THE RELIGIOUS INSTINCT

When I love most—I am turned psalmist.
I have expression from my wrong.
I bay like a ghost-scenting hound,
"Where is God hid? for I would smite him with a song."
Come back, Jehovah,
Give me cover.
Come back, old god,
For I have lost my lover.

"OUT OF THE WOMB OF MOTHER SIN"

Out of the womb of Mother Sin,
With stained and sensitive skin,
Is born the strong solitary soul
Who is master of power and of control.
Fearlessness did him beget;
Nor let the moralist forget,
The child of Sin and Courage well may be
Nobler than any child of timid Purity.

THE SLIGHTED LADY

THERE was a man who won a beautiful woman.
Not only was she lovely, and shaped like a woman,
But she had a beautiful mind.
She understood everything the man said to her;
She listened and smiled,
And the man possessed her and grew in ecstasy;
And he talked while the woman listened and smiled.

But there came a day when the woman understood even
more than the man had said;
Then *she* spoke, and the man, sated with possession, and
weary with words, slept.
He slept on the threshold of his house.
The woman was within, in a small room.

Then to the window of her room
Came a young lover with his lute,
And thus he sang:

" O, beautiful woman, who can perfect my dreams.
Take my soul into your hands
Like a clear crystal ball.
Warm it to softness at your breast,
And shape it as you will.
We two shall sing together living songs,
And walk our Paradise, in an eternal noon—
Come, my Desire, I wait."

But the woman, remembering the sleeper and her faith,
Shook her good head, to keep the longing from her eyes,
At which the lover sang again, and with such lusty
rapture
That the sleeper waked,
And, listening to the song, he said:
" My woman has bewitched this man—
He is seduced.
What folly does he sing?
This woman is no goddess, but my wife;
And no perfection, but the keeper of my house."

Whereat the woman said within her heart;
" My husband has not looked at me for many days—
He has forgot that flesh is warm,
And that the spirit hungers.
I have waited long within the house;
I freeze with dumbness, and I go."

Then she stept down from her high window
And walked with her young lover, singing to his lute.

GIFT TO A JADE

For love he offered me his perfect world.
This world was so constricted, and so small,
It had no sort of loveliness at all,
And I flung back the little silly ball.
At that cold moralist I hotly hurled,
His perfect, pure, symmetrical, small world.

SONG

I was so chill and overworn and sad,
To be a lady was the only joy I had.
I walked the street as silent as a mouse,
Buying fine clothes, and fittings for the house.

But since I saw my love,
I wear a simple dress,
And happily I move,
Forgetting weariness.

MAGNETISM

THE little king
Came preening to the presence of the great,
Who wore no jewelled thing
To show imperial state.
Had the small king been wise,
He'd read dominion in a mummer's eyes.

The peacock princeling spoke his will,
While the great lord sat still.
But steady eyes had filched a soul away:
A braggart withered in his husk that day.
Had the small king been wise,
He'd read dominion in a mummer's eyes.

FRIEND CATO

WHEN the master sits at ease
He joys in generalities;
In aphorisms concerning all things human,
But most of all concerning woman.
Saying, "Women are this or that . . .
Woman is round, or high, or square, or flat."

Sir, a shepherd knows his sheep apart,
And mothers know young babes by heart.
To taste no little shade of difference
Is sign of undiscerning sense.
Cato, in pity, hear our just demur,
Man, to be critic, must be connoisseur.

SUSANNAH IN THE MORNING

WHEN first I saw him I was chaste and good,
And he, how ruthless, pardoned not the mood.
From one quick look I knew him dear,
And gave the highest tribute of my fear.
So I played woman to his male:
How better could his power prevail!
But his hot sense showed quick surprise
At the slow challenge of my shaded eyes.
In a closed room what fires may burn!
O my cold lover will you not return?
To the high night I fling my prayer:
Master of chariots, drive me in the air!

DEDICATION

I WALKED when the wood was full of minstrelsy.
A pretty prince came down to talk with me.
He spoke so kindly, and quite loud:
Then he was gone, quick as high cloud.
That he came here is such a happy thing,
I sit quite still in the wood and sing.

THE TIRED MAN

I AM a quiet gentleman,
And I would sit and dream;
But my wife is on the hillside,
Wild as a hill-stream.

I am a quiet gentleman,
And I would sit and think;
But my wife is walking the whirlwind
Through night as black as ink.

O, give me a woman of my race
As well controlled as I,
And let us sit by the fire,
Patient till we die!

SELF ANALYSIS

THE tumult of my fretted mind
Gives me expression of a kind;
But it is faulty, harsh, not plain—
My work has the incompetence of pain.

I am consumed with slow fire,
For righteousness is my desire;
Towards that good goal I cannot whip my will,
I am a tired horse that jibs upon a hill.

I desire Virtue, though I love her not—
I have no faith in her when she is got:
I fear that she will bind and make me slave,
And send me songless to the sullen grave.

I am like a man who fears to take a wife,
And frets his soul with wantons all his life.
With rich, unholy foods I stuff my maw;
When I am sick, then I believe in law.

I fear the whiteness of straight ways—
I think there is no colour in unsullied days.
My silly sins I take for my heart's ease,
And know my beauty in the end disease.

Of old there were great heroes, strong in fight,
Who, tense and sinless, kept a fire alight:
God of our hope, in their great name,
Give me the straight and ordered flame.

TO D. M.

I WITH fine words wear all my life away,
And lose good purpose with the things I say;
Guide me, kind silent woman, that I give
One deed for twice ten thousand words, and so I live.

THE MAN WITH A HAMMER

THE MAN WITH A HAMMER

My Dear was a mason
  And I was his stone.
And quick did he fashion
  A house of his own.

As fish in the waters,
  As birds in a tree,
So natural and blithe lives
  His spirit in me.

INVITATION

Come, my Content,
The hungry days are spent!—
Beauty, illumine me
As sunlight fills a narrow waveless sea!

EXAMINATION

If my work is to be good,
I must transcend skill, I must master mood.
For the expression of the rare thing in me,
Is not in *do*, but deeper, in *to be*.
Something of this kind was meant,
When piety was likened to a scent.
A smell is not a movement, not in power,
It is a function of a perfect flower.

I only compass something rare
By the high form of willing which is prayer.
A ship transcendent and a sword of fire,
I write my thought in this most raggèd way,
That being baulked of beauty, I am stung to pray.

RETURN OF PLEASURE

I thought there was no pleasure in the world
Because of my fears.
Then I remembered life and all the words in my language.
And I had courage even to despise form.
I thought, "I have skill to make words dance,
To clap hands and to shake feet,
But I will put myself, and everything I see, upon the page.
Why should I reject words because of their genealogy?
Or things, because of their association?
Why should I scorn a bus rather than a ship?"

FECUNDITY

FRET and strain,
And ugly signs of pain,
Never yet had part
In birth of Art.
Men are brought forth in grief;
Labour for Beauty is a soul's relief.
Expression is conceived, and has its shape,
Of Sloth's most painful, violent rape.
A spirit big with Beauty shall be discontent,
She knows all rapture when her time is spent.
Go! my sick striving spirit, seek
A simple, swift, victorious technique!

RESOLUTION

I WILL not draw only a house or a tree,
I will draw very Me;
Everything I think, everything I see!

I will have no shame,
No hope of praise nor fear of blame!
These things are mean things, and the same.

I am the product of old laws,
Old effect of old cause.
The thing that is, may make the blind gods pause.

FORMALIST

As men whose bones are wind-blown dust, have sung,
Let me sing now!
I'll sing of gourds, and goads, of honey, and the plough.
I am a raw uneasy parvenu,
I am uncertain of my time.
How can I pour the liquor of new days
In the old pipes of Rhyme?

COMMENT

TONE
Is utterly my own.
Far less exterior than skill,
It comes from the deep centre of the will;
For nobler qualities of Song,
Not singing, but the singer must be strong.

NOTE ON RHYME

LIKENESS of sound,
With just enough of difference
To make a change of sense;
So we have contrast,
A piquancy,
And a certain victory of contrivance.
But Heaven keep us from an inevitable rhyme,
Or from a rhyme prepared!

Rhymed verse is a wide net
Through which many subtleties escape.
Nor would I take it to capture a strong thing,
Such as a whale.

THE POET IN THE HOUSE

A SMALL oak grew in an elder-hedge,
Rustling with growth, he said,
"I am an oak, an oak!"
The elders bent to him with heavy scent,
Taunting, "O, little weed!"

The oak shrank into himself, and made ready to die.
But a wave of courage swept over him
Deep from the heart of his mother-oak.
He drew himself up with passion, crying still,
"I am an oak."

He pressed himself against the coward leaves,
Up against the heavy scent,
And he prevailed!
In future days, there will be no elder-hedge,
Only an oak.

FEAR OF THE SUPREME

I DREAMED that I was hungry all day long
Until at night I ate a song.
It was as if I dined upon the Host, and so was satisfied;
But of ecstatic surfeit quick I died.

O! Love, come to me now, and hold me fast,
Lest I should eat that deadly food at last.

A WOMAN IN BED

SOMETIMES when I go to rest
I lie and struggle for expression,
And failing, fall to sick depression,
And beat my breast.

By blows, I cannot 'scape
The utter irritation
Of my poor soul's frustration,
For so I know my shape.

And often have I found
An added sadness,
Bringing me to madness,
Because my breast is round.

How can I, being woman,
Dedicate nights
Which should be sacred to delights,
To this lust of words, which is so broadly human!

But through the well-clothed days
I can forget my skirt;
I hide my breast beneath a workman's shirt,
And hunt the perfect phrase.

THE RECLUSE

I'M tired of living in the town,
Of trailing up, and trailing down.
My very heart feels like a street,
Sullied with busy living ana with dusty feet.

Nor is there any peace for me in fields,
There I remember crops and market-yields.
In the quiet cow I have no gain,
For she recalls loud milk-cans on a train.

I dream that there is harbourage for me,
In the blue breath of some remoter sea,
On a brown rock weed-tipt to malachite,
Where sea-gulls wheeling from their track, alight.

There I would live, with gulls'-eggs for my food,
My only recreation, to be good,
With only passing Time for fate,
Free of my friends, and cool without a mate.

DEMAND

GIVE me an hour
Of perfect freedom and of power!—
When I see done
All things I longed for 'neath the Sun—
Then let me die
A flame-burst to the Sky!

THE TIRED WOMAN

O MY Lover, blind me,
Take your cords and bind me.
Then drive me through a silent land
With the compelling of your open hand!

There is too much of sound, too much for sight,
In thundrous lightnings of this night,
There is too much of freedom for my feet,
Bruised by the stones of this disordered street.

I know that there is sweetest rest for me,
In silent fields, and in captivity.
O Lover! drive me through a stilly land
With the compelling of your open hand.

THE UNREMITTING WEARINESS

I AM so tired I cannot move,
I would sit still and love.
I carried souls so long in pain,
I too would be a child again.

Man who is not child to woman
Is either rogue or more than human.—
I rested once upon my father's strength:
O to find peace in love at length!

Man, are you strong to take my proffered hand,
And to be kind when you command?
There was a saint who carried children up a steep,
Make me *your* child, and let me sleep.

THE WIFE

I HAVE no rest,
I am a guest at best,
I can be driven from the house,
Like bat or mouse,
If I please not the house's lord,
For bed and board.

I spend my days
In dull sequestered ways,
Without right to praise.
My brain dies
For want of exercise,
I dare not speak,
For I am weak.

'Twere better for my man and me,
If I were free,
Not to be done by, but to be.
But I am tied,
Free movement is denied.
I am a man's wife
For all my life!

WOMAN DETERMINES TO TAKE HER OWN ADVICE

THIS is too rare a festival for joy,
As was that joy too rare for my worn kisses,
When first I put a babe to my good breast.
Then was my body justified, with love,
And all such enterprise.

When I conceivèd that good plan
I made no feudal compact with my man,
For in my body's service is not found
A warrant that my will be always bound.

Now, being mother, this I see
I am thrice woman, and the soul of me
Is herded to an end I never sought
Like cow or sheep, and my desire is naught.

Who can my fuller need divine,
From the curved symbol of my body's line?
So for a simple accident of shape,
Compass all ruin with my soul's rape.

This is too rare a festival for joy,
For a new thing is born of other labours.
I will break an heirloom, shout and stamp for this victory.
I will fling my freedom at the stars,
And with a good conceit think so to shake the spheres.

And when shall Heaven tremble,
But when tired eyes,
Scanning long empty spaces,
So see God.

OUTLINE

MAN I shall beget to-morrow.
Where is he?
Life a load, the load a sorrow,
Better not to be.
Man I shall beget to-morrow,
Non-existent? Where is he?

He is spread in fields of wheat,
Low in grass that cows shall eat.
There are fragments of himself
High upon some warehouse shelf.
Any atom he may be,
Any atom may be he.

She the focus will control,
The new body, but the soul?
That is free.
The husk is made of any meat,
Any grass or any wheat.
But man has personality;
He alone is he,
The man *is* I get to-morrow
Whole in destiny.

Can I then be free?

DEFINITION

WHAT is a wife?
Is it she who stays in a man's house for all her life?—
If wife were nothing more than that
Then she were equalled by a homing cat.

What is a wife? Shall it be said
She who by contract shares a bed?—
Go find a thousand wives complete
In girls that flaunt along the street!

Nor is it she, content with sequence from a cause,
Who, like a field increase by just laws,
And from a habit and with no end clear,
Brings forth a child for every wedded year.

Wives are the dreaming mothers come again
Who of blest fertile love bear souls of men!
Sometimes, with kindly silence, sometimes with stinging speech
Put a man's high attainment well within his reach.

There is a Virgin-Mother, shrined in Christianity,
There is a virgin wife in faiths to be,
For the constructive form-inducing principle for life,
Is she unknown, unnamed God's wife,
Who out of crystal-bearing water drew the higher ape:—
She might give even Socialism shape!

THE ANGRY WOMAN

I AM a woman, with a woman's parts,
And of love I bear children.
In the days of bearing is my body weak,
But why because I do you service, should you call me
slave?

I am a woman in my speech and gait,
I have no beard (I'll take no blame for that!)
In many things are you and I apart,
But there are regions where we coincide,
Where law for one is law for both.

There is the sexless part of me that is my mind.

You calculate the distance of a star,
I, thanks to this free age, can count as well,
And by the very processes you use.
When we think differently of two times two,
I'll own a universal mastery in you!—

Now of marriage,—
In marriage there are many mansions,
(This has been said of Heaven).
Shall you rule all the houses of your choice
Because of manhood or because of strength?
If I must own your manhood synonym for every strength,
Then must I lie.

If sex is a criterion for power, and never strength,
Who do we gain by union?
I lose all, while nothing worthy is so gained by you,
O most blessed bond!

Because of marriage, I have motherhood.
That is much, and yet not all!
By the same miracle that makes me mother
Are you father.

It is a double honour!
Are you content to be from henceforth only father,
And in no other way a man?
A fantastic creature like a thing of dreams
That has so great an eye it has no head.
I am not mother to abstract Childhood, but to my son,
And how can I serve my son, but to be much myself?

My motherhood must boast some qualities,
For as motherhood is diverse
So shall men be many charactered
And show variety, as this world needs.

Shall I for ever brush my infant's hair?
Cumber his body in conceited needle-work?
Or shall I save some pains till he is grown?
Show him the consolation of mathematics
And let him laugh with me when I am old?

If he is my true son,
He will find more joy in number and laughter
Than in all these other things.

Why should dull custom make my son my enemy
So that the privilege of his manhood is to leave my house?
You would hold knowledge from me because I am a mother,
Rather for this reason let me be wise, and very strong,—
Power should be added to power.

And now of love!—
There are many loves.
There is love, which is physiology,
And love, which has no more matter in it than is in the mind.
There is spiritual love, and there is good affection.
All these loves women need, and most of all the last.

Kiss me sometimes in the light.
Women have body's pain of body's love.
Let me have flowers sometimes, and always joy.
And sometimes let me take your hand and kiss you honestly
Losing nothing in dignity by frank love.
If I must fly in love and follow in life,
Doing both things falsely,
Then am I a *mime,*
I have no free soul.

Man! For your sake and for mine, and for the sake of
future men,
Let me speak my mind in life and love.
Be strong for love of a strong mate,
Do not ask my weakness as a sacrifice of power.
When you deny me justice
I feel as if my body were in grip of a cold octopus,
While my heart is crushed to stone.

This rapture have I of pretence!

SONG OF THE LOW-CASTE WIFE

What have you given me for my strong sons?
O scion of kings!
In new veins the blood of old kings runs cold.
Your people thinking of old victories, lose the lust of
conquest,
Your men guard what they have,
Your women nurse their silver pots.
Dead beauty mocks hot blood!
What shall these women conceive of their chill loves
But still more pots?

But I have conceived of you new men;
Boys brave from the breast,
Running and striving like no children of your House,
And with their brave new brains
Making new myth.

My people were without, while yours were kings.
They sang the song of exile in low places
And in the stress of growth knew pain.
The unprepared world pressed hard upon them;
Women bent beneath burdens, while cold struck babes,
But they arose strong from the fight,
Hungry from their oppression.
And I am full of lust,
Which is not stayed with your old glories.
Give me for all old things that greatest glory—
A little growth.

Am I your mate because I share your bed?
Go then! Find each day a new mate outside your house.
I am your mate if I can share your vision.
Have you no vision, king-descended?
Come share mine!
Will you give me this, for your sons?
O scion of kings!

TO THE SILENT MAN

THAT you should love is not enough for me,
Come tell your love with pleasing courtesy.
I keep no faith in silence, I am wild and weak;
Now by the beauty of all wandering fires, I beg you speak.
Here is a rout of whispered loves and laughter,
And I must turn about and follow after.

To hymn Love, to live because of Beauty,
That is Love's life, that is a lover's duty.
Can you not see I weep because I go?
Speak, dumb Man! Speak! Say, shall I stay or no?

SUPPLICATION

I STRETCH starved hands through the night,
Praying for tenderness.
Mary! From your calm height,
Pity my loneliness!
Incline a heart to loving-kindness,
Which strikes me dead of cold, because of blindness.

THE WIFE'S SONG.—I

I WOULD carry you in my arms,
My strong One,
As if you were a child;
Over the long grass plains by the sea,
Where dunes are piled.

In the grey light of day that is late
Against wind from the sea I would carry your weight,
Till my body faint, but for love's control,
My soul will not faint to carry your soul.

I, who so weak had fallen to Hell,
Carry my load, and my Love's load well.
Old Sea, let us be steadfast!
New Hills, give us hope of change!
Wind from the sea, cleanse us!
And you—O Pain, and Heaviness,
Sanctify me! Sanctify me!

THE WIFE'S SONG.—II

Two gifts I gave you, Love and Sorrow,
Of which the last is best,
But O, my Dear! 'Twas bitter giving,
Come here to me and rest.

What victory shall your world deny you,
Now you have wept?
All peace of love I will restore you
When you have slept.

CREATRIX

LET us thank Almighty God
For the woman with the rod.
Who was ever and is now
Strong essential as the plough.
She shall goad and she shall drive,
So to keep man's soul alive.
Amoris with her scented dress
Beckons, in pretty wantonness;
But the wife drives, nor can man tell
What hands so urge, what powers compel.

THE SHREW

You wish, O master of my destiny,
That I control myself!
'Twere better you ruled me.
For if I rule myself, I smile at you, and hate.
If you rule me, I love you though I curse, O mate!

REWARD

There is great gain,
Of pride and pain:
Let me be proud to claim the highest for my own:
Let me bear pain, to fight my claim alone.

THE SAD LOVER

I WEEP for happy-sweet days
When your love was near me
Strong in its magical ways,
To hold and cheer me!

To my sad broken life,
Your love had given,
For endless, hopeless strife,
Peace of high Heaven.

I thought your charmèd cure
Could have no ending,
And shall no spell endure
Of your dear befriending?

As a dead miser yearns
For earth-stored treasure,
So fiercely my soul burns
For old sweet pleasure

Chilled by the bitter power
Of sodden sinning,
I find no splendid hour
As at love's beginning.

Now that my faith is weak,
Fearful I meet you!
Like a shy stranger speak,
When joy should greet you.

I deep in sorrow sing,
My passion proving,
" There is one beautiful thing,
Your tender loving."

Weep! Weep! for happy-sweet days,
When your love was 'near me,
Come from your solitary ways,
To hold and cheer me.

THE ARTIFICER

I FEEL that your neglect has flayed my soul
And left it a sore, bleeding, pulsing whole!
I feel there is hot fire in pain,
To boil the iron-pot that is my brain!

All my experience, all my thoughts and dreams,
Bubble together, and the mixture steams;
In lovely shapes the bluey vapours rise,
Angels and kindly goddesses console my eyes.

Into the boiling pot I plunge my spoon,
And of hot misery receive my boon,
For from the viscid liquor make I shapes,
Fairies and goblins, little goats and apes.

Many-hued jewels, gem-like flowers,
Bright beads to count kind prayers and happy hours;
Once from the pot a crystal sphere I wrought,
It was a new, clear, and quite splendid thought.

NECROMACY

If she could take two types of man,
Man that she loves, and man that she desires,
And fuse them in a magic pan,
Over the holy fires,
She might by Sorcery discover
A perfect Lover.

But she must build her Paradise above her,
Inherit Heaven after she is old,
For she can find no pleasant Love to love her,
The world is void of pleasure, and death-cold.

THE RECOMPENSE

Of every step I took in pain
I had some gain.
Of every night of blind excess
I had reward of half-dead idleness.
Back to the lone road
With the old load!
But rest at night is sweet
To wounded feet.
And when the day is long,
There is miraculous reward of song.

FLAGELLANT

HAPPINESS is like a kind wife,
Within her rounded arms, she carries Sleep.
But I who am mad for Ecstasy, would keep
The favour of my mistress, Sorrow, all my life.

For Sorrow's sake,
Through the dark hours I lie awake.
So that my songs shall greet a day,
Which has forgot the pleasures of my clay.

THE STORMY MOON

I SAID, "I cannot look at beauty,
For I am heavy with desire;
I cannot touch this child's sweet hair,
My hand is fire."
O! I was desolate,
Burned dry and white,
Shut out from all kind comfort,
In the hungry night.

I did not heed the dark about me,
My head was bowed.
A scurrying wind came down and smote me,
Till I remembered cloud.
I raised my eyes to a wild cloud-drift,
And saw the travelling Moon.
Beauty and cold were so restored me,
And peace came soon.

WORDS

THERE came a lazy Celt,
Sunny and gay,
And he caused black ice to melt
With the things that he did say.

He said, "O! My Desire,
Behold your Lover stands,
His heart a cage of fire;
Come! Warm cold hands."

He said, "O! My Delight,
Be happy and be brave,
Weep no more for fright,
For I am a cave.

And I am kind and warm
And shut from icy air,
Where you shall find no harm
But live like a small brown bear.

O! Shelter in me, Sweet,
And let me give you rest,
For I love your hair and your feet,
And your pleasant moving breast."

ABDICATION

O JUDGMENT sleep!
I love an unkind thief.
Let me be friend of Frailty
For my sick heart's relief.

I would be as the shore's sand
Subject to an advancing sea,
I would be as sunken land
Swept by a tide's strong mastery.

But my contemning mind is as a lighthouse tower,
And I am sore for strength, and lashed because of power.

ASEPTIC

To live on a sterile hill
Suits not my mood,
I'll walk in towns my fill,
With strong resisting blood.

There is no virtue in stark fear,
Whether it be of Sin or Death,
But there is pride in walking clear,
Through Plague's contaminating breath.

DIVORCE

A VOICE from the dark is calling me,
In the close house I nurse a fire.
Out in the dark, cold winds rush free,
To the rock heights of my desire.
I smother in the house in the valley below,
Let me out to the night, let me go, let me go!

Spirits that ride the sweeping blast,
Frozen in rigid tenderness,
Wait! For I leave the fire at last,
My little-love's warm loneliness.
I smother in the house in the valley below,
Let me out to the night, let me go, let me go!

High on the hills are beating drums.
Clear from a line of marching men
To the rock's edge the hero comes.
He calls me, and he calls again.
On the hill there is fighting, victory, or quick death,
In the house is the fire, which I fan with sick breath.
I smother in the house in the valley below,
Let me out to the dark, let me go, let me go!

NERVOUS PROSTRATION

I MARRIED a man of the Croydon class
When I was twenty-two.
And I vex him, and he bores me
Till we don't know what to do!
It isn't good form in the Croydon class
To say you love your wife,
So I spend my days with the tradesmen's books
And pray for the end of life.

In green fields are blossoming trees
And a golden wealth of gorse,
And young birds sing for joy of worms:
It's perfectly clear, of course,
That it wouldn't be taste in the Croydon class
To sing over dinner or tea:
But I sometimes wish the gentleman
Would turn and talk to me!

But every man of the Croydon class
Lives in terror of joy and speech.
"Words are betrayers," "Joys are brief"—
The maxims their wise ones teach—
And for all my labour of love and life
I shall be clothed and fed,
And they'll give me an orderly funeral
When I'm still enough to be dead.

I married a man of the Croydon class
When I was twenty-two.
And I vex him, and he bores me
Till we don't know what to do!
And as I sit in his ordered house,
I feel I must sob or shriek,
To force a man of the Croydon class
To live, or to love, or to speak!

RETROSPECT

Your talk was most in praise of these poor features,
And of my body—not unequalled 'mongst God's creatures.
And even did your courteous fancy find
Some small perfection in a woman's mind.
But of my soul, sir, not a word!
Till your quite reasonable anger stirred
To bring our love to sudden wreck.
'Twas then you stayed my ecstasies
With truth! Which ended in this wise:—
"Woman! Your soul's a stone about your neck."

Maybe our love had happier consummation
Had this part known more quick consideration!

THE PIONEER

God send that never I speak truth again!
It's too strong meat for these most silly men!
God send that never in my life I lie!
God give me blessèd silence till I die!

TRADUCERS

Kinder the enemy who must malign us,
Than the smug friend who will define us

THE CHOICE

Two lovers wooed a woman.
The first was very kind and courtly, and he said—
" I offer you my honourable name,
And all the things there are to do, I do,
And everything you wish for I will give,
And you will be my lady, I your knight."

But the other smiled and said—
" Our love is late, I have no house to offer you,
But one good gift—yourself.
And you shall walk with me without constraint,
And all your words my wit shall understand,
And when our eyes meet full, we two shall smile,
And you will be my woman, I your man,
And you shall serve me."
Then the woman came softly to that man's side, and sat her down.

THE PROMISE

I WILL not love you for my duty,
Nor for all your treasure,
But I will love because of beauty,
And because of pleasure.
The boy that I shall bear will be a love-child,
Conceived in holy blindness,
I give him to the world who shall be reconciled
To loving-kindness.
Since I no longer love for duty,
Nor for all man's treasure,
And since I bear the child to Beauty
Because of pleasure.

THE ASSIGNATION

GENTLEMEN came wooing me
From north, east, west and south,
And each was afire
With quick desire
With a hot kiss on his mouth;
And there was never joy for me
From this dun, dull democracy.

My King, O my Delight!
Who is so strangely dear,
Kiss me not to-night,
Kiss me not for a year.
Let us live lonely days,
Keeping a holy fast,
Walking rough hilly ways,
So that we meet at last,
Near fir-trees on a height,
In still, kind, perfect night.

CEREMONY

BRING her rare unguents, and clear scented water,
And a gold gown, fit for a king's white daughter.
Bring mounds of flowers that she may spill about,
And herbs to make sweet smoke ere she goes out.
The victor is this maid's delight,
And he keeps tryst to-night.

SERVICE

I LOVE you so entirely
I cannot think to please you,
My art is wasted.
You are burnt with madness,
My being burns to ease you.
In dreams of utter service,
Is all sweetness tasted.

I love you so entirely,
I want you not to praise me!
I would be low in all esteem!
I would be outcast with one thing to raise me,
The hope of service I have gathered in a dream.

Let us go to the mountains, O my Lover!
And make our habitation near the sky;
In clear, cool air we can discover
A plan of perfect living, you and I.

THE CRUEL LOVER

I ASK your pardon that your pain
Should be so quick your lover's gain.
But when I know your love's distress,
My heart leaps high with happiness.
It sends kind tincture to my lips,
I walk with a new rhythm from the hips.

REMEMBRANCE

WHAT shall I do with my marriage dress?
In which I walked the lover's way?
Shall I wear it in forgetfulness,
Through a less honoured day?
Shall fastenings he has drawn for his delight,
Be loosed by a less honoured hand, at night?

STATE ENDOWMENT

FLOWERS all natural sweet,
That women sell on baskets in the street,
Lose half their beauty in my eyes,
They are a huckster's merchandise.

Who offers, then, to buy from me
That natural service, my maternity?

ORDEAL

I CAN endure the blight of drought
And the black rigour of my wild,
But not the name of Beauty on his mouth
And not to see him with a child.

THE FAITHFUL MOTHER

I COULD not be withheld from you by iron bands,
All cerements would be riven,
That we should claim our heaven,
But I am here in bondage, to these little, little hands!

If I unclasp the tender fingers and walk free,
Our love shall have no gain
From that poor hopeless pain,
For I shall lose my soul because of infamy.

O! Shall I walk your sunny gardens a cold ghost,
And will you cover me with flowers,
That I may spend sequestered hours,
Weeping the lovelier Blossoms I have lost!

I could not be withheld from you by iron bands,
All cerements would be riven,
That we should claim our heaven,
But I am here in bondage, to these little, little hands!

AFTER ANNUNCIATION

REST, little Guest,
Beneath my breast.
Feed, sweet Seed,
At your need.
I took Love for my lord
And this is my reward,
My body is good earth,
That you, dear Plant, have birth.

A BOY'S MOUTH

HIS lips are open, since his mind
Delights in work his fingers find.
In that red arch I see a gate,
Where gracious Loves might pass in state.
Sure his white body were fit habitation
For a whole fairy population.

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW

THIS is what my lover said,
"I kissed your hat because it touched your head,
I kissed your shiny shoes, I'll kiss you all,
I love your house, I'll kiss your wall.
I wish that I could kiss that burning coal
Because it's in your fire, dear Soul!"

My little Son is my fond lover—
It seems no time ago since he was born.
I know he will be quick and happy to discover
The world of other women, and leave me forlorn!
Sometimes I think that I'll be scarcely human
If I can brook his chosen woman!

THE INDIVIDUALIST

When I get a child,
I get him with fixed intent;
I don't get him by accident.
I get him because I am content with life,
Satisfied with myself,
And because I love my wife.

When the child is born,
I am full of scorn
At thought of other children.
By instinct I divine
There never was so fine a boy as mine.
I think this, because I am satisfied with life,
Conceited with myself,
And because I love my wife.

And I want to keep my son,
I want to finish what I have begun.
It is one of the keenest pleasures that I know
To feed a child and watch him grow.
I don't want to give him to the State;
I want to share him with my mate.
I like going into hustling life,
To bring back something for my boy and wife.

I do this because the old Brave
Hunted from the cave.

Because a lion in the wilderness
Kills for the cub and lioness,
And because I am satisfied with life,
Conceited with myself,
And because I love my wife.

THE WALK

We will walk through this wood,
Rustling through dead leaves,
Crunching on fallen boughs,
I will walk first, you must follow me.
We will go like beasts on a trail.
I am a lion, you my lioness.

I will take my own pace,
You must strain your curved brittle body to keep near
me.
I do this because I see in your eyes that you will talk.
O wanton! You will stab me with subtleties.
I have no head for economics. What of that?
Your eyes, your hair, your teeth, your body,
You have used against me,
And now your mind is a sharp sword to stab me.

I want to walk in this wood,
To look at the sky, and note the tracery of leaves,
And listen for an early cuckoo.
But you will have me sit beside you,
Tell you that you are a beautiful woman,
And praise your wit.

I will not tell you that you are a beautiful woman,
You are my wife!
You know well that I feel every stir of you,
Can you not remember the touch of my hand on your
arm?

I will say nothing at all about your wit,
But I will tell you this,
I think it very possible, that one of our sons,
Yours and mine, will be a man of genius.

O Jezebel! I see the triumph leap to your eyes.
You love your children less than yourself.
Are you the only parent of our son?
Did not my love make you mother?
Did I not know from the first moment that I saw you,
Your splendid suitability?

That act of mine means more to life
Than all your economics.
You shall not waste your time with books!
I will have other sons of you, and perhaps a girl.
I will tell you that your daughter is beautiful.

Now look at me!
This only matters to us.
You are a woman, I am male.
I am male till the last atom of my tissue dies.—
Come now, walk!

ALL MEN TO WOMEN

You have taken our life in your hands, like a small sick
bird;
As you might feed him with your lips, so with your word
Have you sustained us; remembering your kind eyes
We have forgot our pitiless ways, and have grown wise.

With brittle strength to fight and to desire,
What do we but bring fuel to your fire?
For our best labour, your fine powers control,
O maker of man's body and his soul!

The flower of all our winning we would give
To mightier men, the Race that is to live.
On your good courage must our victory rest,
You bear all future days beneath your breast.

O pitiful heart! From whom we draw our strength,
Would you have wisdom? Know your power at length,
From our frail might grant us the thing we seek.
We who are born so small, and live so weak.

A GIRL IN SUMMER

SHE took the summer to her blood
Through her sweet mouth.
Until her sleepy mood
Was warm as sunny walls of the old south.
It seemed the yellow light
Had fruitful powers,
Beneath her bosom's white
Leapt sudden flowers.
Each round as the breast
From whose dear core it sprang,
And in the middle of each flower a nest,
In which a young bird sang;
Sang for joy of a coming
And for joy of a name,
And the petals of the flower
Leapt like flame.
Driving with a sweet compelling
Towards his dwelling,
As her singing birds were telling.

THE ANCHORITE

YE Chaste, who nurse your souls upon chill heights,
What can you give us but a dead world?

I have walked too long in the strait road,
I have kept my limbs from the dance,
I have flung no songs to the Stars.
What have I for my stillness, but a tale of things undone!

Rather had I borne the common yoke,
Better had I made a fellow of Sin
Than win this sterile victory.

O! moving Powers, inflame me,
Lead me to some brave combat,
Though then you throw me to deep Hell
With one full memory.

Now I surrender a pale heaven
Of unbegotten spirits, and of unfilled days.

THE SONG-MAKER

I WOULD live for a day and a night,
In the rigorous land where everything's right.
Then I would sit and make a song,
In the leisurely land where everything's wrong.

IMPERATRIX

Am I pleasant?
Tell me that, old Wise!
Let me look into your eyes,
To see if you can comprehend my beauty,
That is a lover's duty.
I look at you to see
If you can think of anything but me.
Ah, you remember praise and your philosophy!
My love shall be a sphere of silence and of light,
Where Love is all alone with love's delight.—
Here is a woodcutter who is so weak
With love of me, he cannot speak.
Tell me, dumb man, am I pleasant, am I pleasant?
Farewell, philosopher! I love a peasant.

SONG OF ANASTASIA

Shall I mock you, and tell you that love shall endure,
Knowing you know the quality of things that are secure?
Let love be fierce as lightning, and as brief
As summer-hail, that is a storm's relief.

QUESTION

IF I live all my days by routine,
Keeping days ordered and ways clean,
Will there be room for Love in my life?
Love who is born in storm, and lives in strife.

THE CONSCIENCE

DEADLY destructive to my man and me
Are my rare fits of sore morality.
A mad, domestic hell begins
When woman hides her virtues, and displays her sins.

SONG OF THE WEAK

O PITYING heart be strong!
Our load is heavy and the road is long,
And there is little light to cheer our day
And little kindness on the mourner's way.

RELEASE

I HAVE lived five years of mourning,
I live a bittered year of scorning.
Now of this service is my spirit free,
Free of my grief, and of antipathy.

THE CONTRAST

I KNEW a chaste man, without pity,
I knew the veriest bawd in all this city.
And she was very tender, very kind—
She was most after God's mind.

TATTERDEMALION

O! I will wear a tattered gown
And ash my breast shall cover,
For my bird has gone to the clanging town,
To the hand of my valiant lover!
But still myself shall sit and sing,
By the bed of the old blind king.

O! If I slept in bright array
And bound my hair with beauty,
I'd follow my bird to a feckless day
And leave this dearer duty.
In ash I'll sit, in rags I'll sing,
By the bed of the old blind king.

THE GHOST

I WISH you'd a farm on the hills, my Dear,
And need not work for hire.
For though I'm cold in the churchyard here,
And cannot sit by your fire,
I'd walk the paths of your house, some nights,
And haply look into your room:
Then I'd always see my Love's home-lights
When I stood on the rail of my tomb.

WOMEN AND MULTITUDES

WHEN a weak knave commanded me,
Then I was stung to mutiny!
But when my king spoke his behest,
In quick obedience I found rest.
Now to the dark I cry my need,
"God send us kings, to love, and lead."

THE WOMAN'S MIND

KNOWLEDGE, to me, is wearisome from books,
I learn so readily from words and looks.
Give me yourself as free as air and rain.
I'll drink, I'll think, and send you flowers again.

SELF-ESTEEM

Love with a liquid ecstasy
Did wholly fill me up,
And since his drink is sweet to me
Can I despise his cup?

THE AVENUE

To the tired traveller in summer's heat,
The thought of airy trees is sweet.
Come, in my straight stretched arms discover
A leafy road, thou weary Lover.

THE SOLACE

Since pleasure is a sovereign cure
How can my piteous pain endure?
To-night I hide my face in your dress,
O Font of Peace! O Healing Tenderness!

WARNING

The soul shall be drowned in the flood
Of mounting blood.
Be strong at least
To resist Love,
Except at his feast.

ETERNAL SONGS

I AM a field spread warm before the sun—
Lord of my day! Your love is warmth and light.
In me all growth and pleasure are begun:
A bird soars singing to salute your height.
Love, my fond words,
Are happy birds!

I am the sun's self,
And you the waters of a still bright lake;
My arms encircling airs,
Which draw you, drink you, for my sun-ship's sake.

THE WOMAN OF THE HILL

I WOULD be ever your desired,
Never the possessed—
Nor in this will of mine is wantonness expressed.
The desired woman is most dear,
The possessed wanton is too near.

I would be far on unattainable height—
Always for knowledge, always for sight:
While from your touch and kisses I am free,
Our love is the high, perfect thing to be.

OASIS

O SPRING of my Content,
The parching days are spent.
Where'er your feeding waters move
There is the sweet increase of love.

I, wanderer in a wilderness
Starved of all hope and comfortless,
Now lay me down in groves of cool delight
Which you have nurtured, in a charmèd night.

THE MEETING

WHEN I saw you, you went to my head,
You were like wine to my brain,
I walked in London through the rain,
To see a man who had been ten years dead.
For pleasure I forgot the years,
Old time, old death, old tears.

THE LITTLE LANGUAGE

WHEN I am near you, I am like a child,
I'm still and simple, I am undefiled.
I speak my love in a forgotten tongue,
And use the words I knew when I was young.
My Love! You have restored me in a hundred ways,
You gave me back my happy childish days.

VANITY

I SAW old Duchesses with their young Loves,
I, in a pair of very shabby gloves;
Even my shapeless garments could not make me sad,
For I remembered I was young as you, dear Lad.
That I am lovelier without my dress,
Gave me sweet wanton happiness.

THE WALK IN THE WOODS

HIGH Heaven is insecure.
Give me my paradise while these warm arms endure.
Come, my Love! let us walk in this brake.
Where I can see you sleep, and watch you wake.
So much of pleasure, for Mortality's poor sake.

INVOCATION

COME down, thou friendly Night!
Drive out this traitor Light,
Who will reveal my silent way!
And Darkness give me cover,
That I may find my Lover,
After the fevered day!

IRRESOLUTE LOVER

I SAID, "I will not go to her to-night,"
When I had courage from the prudent light.
My resolution vanished with the day,
When the dark came I could not live away.
O! My dear Love, let down your hair,
Make me a tent, and let me shelter there;
That in the darkness of a screened night
I live more prudent than in loveless light.

A MAN IN LOVE

I WISH no more that beauty walked in light,
Utterly naked to the daily sight.
O rather let some simple dress
Shelter my Woman's loveliness.
So is her beauty love's high prize,
Which I discover with adoring eyes.

THE SILENCE

WHEN I meet you, I greet you with a stare;
Like a poor shy child at a fair.
I will not let you love me—yet am I weak.
I love you so intensely that I cannot speak.
When you are gone, I stand apart,
And whisper to your image in my heart.

FEAR

Now by your love am I restored,
But ask me not for love's reward.
I am full of love as is a cloud
Pregnant with thunders long and loud.
I tremble, for in this wild sky
Are lightnings, by which man may die!

THE FLIGHT

I FEAR your sight,
O Lover!
I make the night
My cover,
I know your touch a dreaded thing;
I go to sombre woods to sing;
Where you are not is such a sick distress
That I must sing a lover's loneliness!
But if my songs shall lead you where I hide,
Then have I silence, now so long denied.

SLAVE OF THE FIRE

I AM weary of my service to the blood of a king,
For my people were farmers out of the West,
I would be wife to this yeoman of whom my heart sings,
In his strong love, I would take my rest.
O! That I might raise a man to my kind,
Shelter him in my womb, and feed him with my mind.

THE SUPREME COURTESY

MY man is like a good steel blade,
As subtle, strong, and finely made,
His power blue-white
As steely light.
O, he is cruel-quick enough!
But to my touch, as pleasant as fine stuff,
And from a wound of him I'd die,
Happy at such keen mastery.

THE FAREWELL

TO-NIGHT
For the last time,
I loose my hair to make a tent about you.
Come, lay your head on my knees.
Your eyes are the lights of a town,
And my body is a sheltering hill.
Now my hair is a cloud,
To hide you from the inquisitive stars.

REGRET

After a grey day's forgetting
Was the red of this sun's setting,
And the ache of my regretting.

To-night my bed is a rack,
I die painful for love's lack . . .
O! My Beloved, come back! come back!

SURRENDER

When you kiss me I am blind,
My senses
Are filled with ecstasy.
I only feel how strong my life is,
And so know myself.
From love I understand all things that live,
And even the dead.

I am like a tree
Shaken in wind.
Or like water that is drawn into the air
Through the strong loving of the sun.

When you are gone,
I am myself earthquake and eclipse,
And all cold darkness, and rending grief.
When you kiss me I am blind.
I am blind!

THE MILL

I HID beneath the covers of the bed,
And dreamed my eyes were lovers,
On a hill that was my head.
They looked upon the loveliest country I have seen,
Great fields of red-brown earth hedged round with green.
In these enclosures I could see
The high perfection of fertility,
I knew there were sweet waters near to feed the land,
I heard the churning of a mill on my right hand,
I woke to breathlessness with a quick start,
And found my mill the beating of your heart.

THE CUP

I DREAMED that all your being was a cup,
Shaped like the hands of an adoring priest.
I dreamed that loving had transposed my blood to wine.
I scented the wine with my low-whispered songs,
So the red liquor was Love's self—

Then with an ecstasy I spilled myself into the cup.

My soul was driven from my body
And waited watching, like pearl-coloured flame;
That flame was prayer,
I prayed you might contain me.

If the arching fulness of the cup be broken,
If Love shall overflow the cup
And fall like blood from a wound,
Then shall my soul's light die.

O, Man, contain me!

SUNG OF CLARISSA

WHY is there healing in her love?
Her mind is clear as streams that flow
Down rock-steps to a vale below,
Bearing on spray the Sun's bright bow,
And singing as they move.

WANDER SONG

When I come to the end of the land,
I find the sea,
With edges of cliff and breadths of sand
To pleasure me.

When I raise my town-tired eyes
There is blue and white,
Or kings and castles of stormy skies,
Or joy of night.

When I weary of all I see
And tire even of space,
I hold your love in memory,
And your dear face.

THE THIEF

I said in pride, " To love's my need;
I will not have him loving me,
I'd walk unhobbled, and indeed
What woman loved was ever free! "

So for a man, I loved a ghost,
And knew chill rapture in the walks of thought,
But when I needed pleasure most,
Imagination gave me naught.

O! Had I given what I fought to take
I had not wept for this cold hunger's sake!

REVELATION

"Love has no shame."—
'Twas this you said to me.
Shall Love reveal
Hid beauties that are real
And still disguise the soul's infirmity
In fear of blame?
"Love has no cruelty."—
See first the wounds that are within
Hid by this quite sufficient skin.
Loving your spirit, I may not deceive it.
Then of my body, Lover—take or leave it.

SEA TO THE WANING MOON

O thou compassionate queen of night!
With what a kind inconsistency
Thou wan'st upon my hopeless sight
To leave me with a memory!

What spite to me who cannot climb,
To see you ever at night's prime,
Compelling with sweet silent speech,
Ever desirous, ever out of reach!

TRANSMUTATION

THERE is happiness for me,
In sight of a great sun-warmed tree.
I pray that roots may touch my head,
When I am dead.
Maybe there is some splendid rhythm in confusion,
And there is hope in dissolution.
I should have little fear of ugly changes, little grief,
If the material of my thought were quick transmuted to
a leaf.

A HOUSE IN HAMPSTEAD

MY house is damp as damp can be,
It stands on London clay.
And if I move unthinkingly
It shakes in a most alarming way,
Mayhap it will all come down on me
One day.

But through the window I can see
The most enchanting apple-tree.
In spring-time, there are daffodils
And primroses on little hills,
And high within my apple-tree
A blackbird comes and sings to me;
On the black branch he sits and sings
Of birds and nests and eggs and things.
I can't remember, as I hear,
That old grey London lies so near.

THE AWAKENING

THERE is a veteran tree,
With green-stained bark,
Rising like a tower of the sea,
From the smooth park.
He is a giant among trees,
And he has watched this house for centuries.

His bark is hard as rock,
Time and Sun and the Wind's shock
Have twisted his boughs till they are like the arms of a
great carven figure of Care,
Flung in passionate appeal to the changing humour of
the Air.
Now on high branches sticky buds appear,
Promise of growth and beauty for the year.—
It seems my life is an old tree,
And the young buds are your sweet love for me.

THE TRESPASSER

THERE is a little goblin in my tree,
He sits up high and mows at me.
He is so wicked, yet so small,
He makes my garden venturous, and my trees tall.

CONCERNING CERTAIN CRITICISM

THERE is no pleasure in hard names for flowers,
Nor in acquaintance with their inner shape.
To ravish Beauty with dividing powers
Is to let exquisite essences escape.
At feasts within a flowery paradise
Parvenu Wit must yield his precedence,
Honours therein are for the nose and eyes,
For that old Exquisite, discerning Sense.

THE EXPLAINERS

THEY have taken the street
From underneath my feet,
Now the great roads appear
Unmeaning scratches on a sphere.
They have given every star its place,
They have made a wearying diagram of what was boundless space,
Long ago they stole fairies from the trees,
They took naiads from the rivers, and mermen from the seas.
I wish that I could tremble now
In fear of a small devil curled upon that bough.
In these imaginings I should find
Relief from the strained stillness, that is my mind.

FAITH

I KEEP a bird in my heart,
He lives on sorrow,
His name is Faith.
He is so quick a conjurer that he can borrow
Flesh from a wraith.

He swallows the harsh weeds of pain
And gives me scope,
To tend my little garden-plot again
And wait for Hope.

INSENSIBILITY

WHY should I weep for Autumn rain?
Give gusty Winter toll of tears?
I know that Spring will come again,
As in the other years.

And there is pleasure in wet ways,
In frozen fields, and mist-strange days;
What were eternal Spring to me,
Whose joy is in diversity!

CONCERNING THE CONVERSATION OF MR. H—

THIS gentleman will only talk to us of *dogs*
Because he wishes to disguise that he's a poet,—
If he should mention lions, dolphins, frogs,
He thinks, by misadventure, we should know it!

He tells us things of white dogs, and of brown,
Of curious breeds with one distinctive spot,
Of all the dogs that ever walked this town,
Of dogs of his acquaintance that have not.

I cite a dog I once set eyes upon
Which, lacking doggy lore, I say looked like a swan;
He takes me, says, "That hound was bred in Russia,
Three such are owned by Henry, Prince of Prussia."

O, modest violet! cowering in your green
Your scent betrays you though you are not seen!
Only unveterinary wights, like you and me,
Would see in dogs a swanny quality!

THE PASSER

I LOVE the stone of your threshold,
I love the path without it,
I love the briar in its borders,
With the brave young plants about it.
There is pleasure in sight of your windows,
And passing, in decorous night,
I smile my love to your window
And bow my love to your light.

THE SENTIMENTAL DEBTOR

LADY, when I recall indebtedness
To you who hid me from my bitter day,
And with kind craft bewitched my griefs away
I would not have my owing to you less!

Untimely night has fallen between us two.
Mine were the blackness of a dumb regret
But for the dear relation of this debt,
Which still unites my destiny to you.

Thus in my cold a little cheer is found,
The fullest debt will hold me fastest bound.
Here's coin for quittance, yet I will withhold
Return in any service, faith or gold.
And since your due is doubly dear to me,
I will not even give you courtesy!

THE BARGAINER

THE clownish reveller is driven hence.
I meet no night with frenzied amorous waste
Nor drug my noon with self-deceiving haste,
This to your light, my reasoned reverence.

Now since I love, I am content with Time.
I scorn that impotent mad will to cause;
Trusting the gradual action of old laws,
To round my life, and to mature my rhyme.

O! You, who are the worker of this change,
Respect in me the measure of your power,
Hold to a steady godhead, lest I range
From growing symmetry of this new hour!
If Chaos wake from shattered Harmony,
Yours be the shame of half divinity.

TO ANITA THE GARDENER

In summer when my life was cold,
Frozen too weary for desire,
I warmed my heart at your marigold,
As at a fire.

It was the first flower from your new ground,
The first gold largess from the care
And loving, you had planted there,
And in the walks around.

I stole your garden's coin to buy content,
A vision of black earth dug deep for flowers.
Through sunny self-forgetful hours,
With joys, God meant.

In summer when my life was cold,
Frozen too weary for desire,
I warmed my heart at your marigold,
As at a fire.

THE CALL

Walk out, my Love, from little houses,
From these dim walls of old restraints,
Heavy with odorous griefs and melancholy plaints,
Cobwebbed with sighs.
Let us find a field where a quiet cow browses,
A field wind-swept to clean content,
And we will love there as God meant,
Under free skies.

VERITY

WHAT do these outpoured lovings prove
But the long ache to love!
O Fate! You are not kind,
To fill this chasm with cold wind.
When had a woman wealth from dreaming,
Or any solace from love's seeming?
Let it be said, that these are dexterous feignings,
Well stated heats, ingenious complainings.
And yet with loathing is my silence broken,
Had they been true, they never had been spoken.
What fuller happiness were it for me,
To leave a mummer's rages
To fill a footnote in my Love's biography,
And not these loving pages.

EPICUREAN LOVER

DEAR! I will love you, though you love me not!
Contempts will never shake my mind!
Misuse and scorn and silence move me not!
But I beseech you, be not kind.
Since loving me, you would approach me;
O, let your distance still reproach me!

For things remembered may be sweet,
As things imagined, and for me
A wearying rhythm of due feet
Were less esteemed than your apostasy.
Then, O my Love! Live still beyond my reach,
Leave me my dream of your dear look and speech.

THE POET'S CHANGE OF MIND

WHO prizes fruit and scorns the tree?
Yet this fair Critic says of me,
I love the work, but hate the man!
Show charier charity who can!

My Lady, I was ever loth
To wait inactive to be loved,
I found in insult, whips from cloth,
When I was stung I moved.
But there is justice for whose sake
A sleepy dignity will wake.
If of my book you prize a part,
Honour a hand, deal fairly with a heart.
The thing you love is very me,
Come, eat the fruit, but love the tree!

DIFFIDENCE

O TIME has a kiss
For every Miss
And a bed for every Trull!
But thou, my Dearie,
O! Come not near me,
Our love is a wheeling gull.
Lovely he flies 'twixt sea and skies,
He's a silly bird on land.
No wrath of black weathers
Will ruffle his feathers
Like the touch of a capturing hand.

TO "NUCLEUS"

'Tis you who hold
My heat, my cold,
My rigour and my ecstasy.
Control my days,
Compel my ways
To action or to lethargy.
You fill my nights
With keen delights
Of a stupendous dreaming.
O! Little Seed,
Who at my need
Flowers to such splendid seeming!

ABSOLUTE

I, your true lover,
Demand neither words nor your silence.
My heart can discover
Delight in transport or in continence.

My faith is zenith, earth, and air,
Ever beneath, about, above,
And when you wander I am there,
So changing-constant—since I love.

THE FALLOW

Now, Tiller, hold your grain,
Leave her to sun and rain
And the kind air.
Then trench her with a well-judged measure
Of feeding pleasure,
And give her peace
To dream of her increase
And your good care.
Well might you reap miraculous yield
From such a happy, nourished field!

THE RETURN

She gave me tears,
A rain to wash the dust of years,
A silence for disharmony,
For jagged wounds a remedy,
Green windy down for fœtid towns,
For slums sweet-scented closes,
And for the thorn of her blest scorn
I gave her thorny roses.

THE WINDED HORN

Ah! my good Wizard she shall not escape,
Though the soul leave her house in a magical shape,
Be it asp, toad or lizard, or tiger or ape,
Sure I will find her, secure I will bind her,
Wherever she fly, in whatever disguise.
I am Love the hunter, all-swift and all-wise,
A torch is my hand and spears are my eyes.

THE LITTLE ROOM

I am my Love's laboratory,
For truly he shall find
The proof of his high quality
Within my heart and mind.
Look down, my Love, my Dear,
At the sure change wrought here!

THE ECONOMIST

It must be true I love you well
Since your light words are whips of Hell.
But who has pain has songs to sell.
My profitable Friends, farewell!

INCONSTANCY

TIME was, when I recalled your words, your looks, your
deeds,
As a rapt nun counts over her blest beads;
Then was my mind so filled with memory
Love had no room to work his change in me,
And I was faithless from my faith's continuance,
Since being changeless I gave no obedience.

I have forgotten you, for these long days,
All unsustained by you I went my ways,
Now at the end I take you back to thought
To find my action was the thing you taught.
And so in faithlessness is faith's continuance,
Since in a change I do you all obedience.

SONG

NOT for an hour shall your dear thought escape me.
I keep it fast to cheer, to guide, to shape me.
As an old pilot held in sight a star,
As a wrecked man clings frantic to a spar,
So I maintain your love in memory,
My hope of haven, my security.

THE POET

HERE is he, at this moment, which is Time's end,
Lonely as he was born, without a friend.
And he has called the hungry to his door,
And he has shared his bounty with the poor.
He has been feasted, he has been desired.
Lovers have drunk of him, till they were tired.
All men have ate his councils and passed by,
Thankless,—as who shall thank the sky.

FOR PITY

MEN are brought low by blame,
So that they live with shame.
Kindness and love and praise
Are strong to heal and raise.

PRAYER FOR MIRACLE

O GOD! No more Thy miracle withhold,
To us in tents give palaces of gold,
And while we stumble among things that are
Give us the solace of a guiding star!

DE PROFUNDIS

How shall I bring this beast into subjection
But by the hope and knowledge of perfection?
Must I avoid all paths my Race has trod?
Shall I not call my vast upholder God?

THE TORTURE

God has raised his whip of Hell
That you be no longer weak.
Because of anguish shall you speak,
Because of anguish, shall you speak well.

SANCTUARY

He who thinks a perfect melody,
Lives, for that time in harmony,
Walks for that time in liberty,
Loves for that time in purity.

IMMORTALITY

The Singer sang through all his years,
But thrifty Honour saved his tears,
And for his piteous toil,
Blessed him with weeping, as with Holy Oil.

THE BUILDERS

A MAN can build a bridge of wood and stone;
Exterior forces his trained powers control;
But the material of the Singer is his own,
He cuts his songs from the raw texture of his soul.

QUEST

WHERE is the miracle? In Future and in Past,
Not in the Present, which must ever last.
The Young and the weak Old must live dream-fed
On gods to be, and on the holy Dead.

THE SONG OF PRIDE

WE are unwilling to lie low,
Crushed by a cursèd tyrant "No."
Give us a fight where we can cry, "I can!"
To show there is the seed of God in man.
If God shall strike us for our pride
Know that in joy of death we died.

MY LADY SURRENDERS

How did *she* abdicate?
Was it with soft sighs
And pretty feignings of a lover's state,
Or was it solemn-wise,
With altar offerings and rapt vows?
O no! when Love himself was there,
Most housewifely she bound her hair
And went off across the field to milk the cows.

COUNSEL OF ARROGANCE

If I were God, I would find equal treasure,
In human work, in courage, and in pleasure.
And I would whisper to the captive soul,
That all these things should be in sweet control.
That man should be from birth-bed to the grave,
Not always busy, not always brave.
That he should gather me the flower of idleness,
And the seed-holding cup of perfect happiness.

PRAYER ON SUNDAY

God send a higher courage
For to cut straight and clean!
God send a juster language,
To state the thing I mean!
Here is such random thinking,
Such sloth, such slime, such fog,
I see an old cow sinking
Deep, in a pitchy bog!

EFFECT OF GIFTS ON A RECIPIENT

When the ape and the wolf bared fangs to eat
A silly dish of praise,
The drowsing master snatched the meat
Which mocked his faithless days.
He grasped the beasts by a hanging chain
And stood in his house, a lord again.
Then out he went through a feeble morn
With the drunken sleep in his eyes,
He begged affront, he craved for scorn,
In mendicant's disguise.
And of these gifts divinely given,
His faith in life, his hope of Heaven.

SUNG TO THE SOCIAL REFORMER

LEAVE us our sorrows,
Take not our tears,
For long to-morrows
Of too perfect years.

To the New-born can you deny
The world-old solace of a cry;
Or to hot Youth the eternal right
To win his having with a fight?

Leave us our sorrows,
Take not our tears,
For long to-morrows
Of too perfect years.

THE JOURNEY

I HAVE seen the harlot decked for death,
I have seen the fruitful woman scorned for ugliness.
I will not embrace Beauty but Order,
Scorning this body which must grow old.

I have heard the loveless laughter of fools,
I have seen the wanton and the pander drunk with mirth.
Laughter is a sacrament which should be shared for
    Love's sake.
Let us then be merry when mirth is no sacrilege.

I have seen the eyes of a smirched man turn from his
    paramour's lapdog
To find refreshment in a child's look.
So for a moment were his banned eyes filled with heav-
    enly light.
Who, seeing this, can still boast sterile loves?

THE VIPER

I HEARD a pander say in scorn of a bawd,
" A child should be her reward."
O rotten speech!
Whose filthiness should teach
That man shall find
Reward for his lewd living, in his mind.

DOOM

Ye Slothful!
The hour of dread is upon you
When the perfect thing shall be accomplished.
The defiler of law
May meet God down avenues of hot sin.
You—performers of nothing,
Who weave your little mats in damp valleys,
What use had mighty God, or a strong devil, for your shrunk souls?
There is black Hell or clear Heaven for the souls of the Willers;
Surely there is an eternal scrap-heap for the souls of the Slothful!
For the rejected of Heaven,
For the throw-outs of any incontemptible Hell.

OUTLAW

Suppression is the duty of a slave,
Expression is morality for the brave.
If you are born a king,
Fight, love, and sing!
But he who walks alone in liberty
Must face the hordes of massed humility.
Now, as of old, a leader risks his head—
A coward dies an inch a day, a hero is quick dead.

THE FRESH START

O GIVE me back my rigorous English Sunday
And my well-ordered house, with stockings washed on
    Monday.
Let the House-Lord, that kindly decorous fellow,
Leave happy for his Law at ten, with a well-furled um-
    brella.
Let my young sons observe my strict house rules,
Imbibing Tory principles, at Tory schools.

Two years now I have sat beneath a curse
And in a fury poured out frenzied verse,
Such verse as held no beauty and no good
And was at best new curious vermin-food.

My dog is rabid, and my cat is lean,
And not a pot in all this place is clean.
The locks have fallen from my hingeless doors,
And holes are in my credit and my floors.

There is no solace for me, but in sooth
To have said baldly certain ugly truth.
Such scavenger's work was never yet a woman's,
My wardrobe's more a scarecrow's than a human's.

I'm off to the House-goddess for her gift.
" O give me Circumspection, Temperance, Thrift;
Take thou this lust of words, this fevered itching,
And give me faith in darning, joy of stitching! "

When this hot blood is cooled by kindly Time
Controlled and schooled, I'll come again to Rhyme.
Sure of my methods, morals and my gloves,
I'll write chaste sonnets of imagined Loves.

DOMESTIC ECONOMY

I WILL have few cooking-pots,
They shall be bright,
They shall reflect to blinding
God's straight light.
I will have four garments,
They shall be clean,
My service shall be good,
Though my diet be mean.
Then I shall have excess to give the poor,
And right to counsel beggars at my door.

THE MOCKER

No longer will I upbraid,
But go my way in silence!
From shame, I am afraid
And brought to my soul's continence!

I saw a man bowed 'neath a Dream,
Go painful, to ransom a city—
'Tis such alone will redeem,
And yet I withheld from him pity.

But as a mocker I spoke,
" Good Ox, graze here, by the road,
'Tis an ignominious yoke
When dust is the load! "

And I saw in a ransomer's eyes
Ire, for God's purpose defamed.
God give me the gag of the wise—
I am shamed!

A SONG OF WOMEN

When Kings knelt to a Maid and a Child,
In a poor place that kings could scorn,
Was Might exalted in a Maid?
Or stark Strength praised in the New-born?

Then was a babe known as Earth's Lord,
And a maid's arm was God's strong shield,
How long shall this Woman wait her reward,
The honour that her love should yield?

Upraised in Churches shrined in Art,
Ages have seen a Girl and Child.
But fullest honour is for days,
When Life and Faith are reconciled.

When Love is counted strong as Strength,
And all the tongues of service speak,
When you in council hear at length
The guardians of your mighty weak.

What splendid empire can you build?
What destiny in pride and lands,
That is not by our babes fulfilled
That is not in your woman's hands.

Now we, the guardians of your Race,
Strong to fulfill your mighty task,
Ask in your Councils for our place,
And you will give us what we ask.

When Kings knelt to a Maid and a Child,
In a poor place that kings might scorn,
Then was our pleading justified,
By that strong Mother and her New-born.

THE FOUNDLING

THERE is a little naked child at the door,
His name is Beauty, and he cries,
" Behold, I am born, put me where I can live."
The old World comes to the door,
And thrusting out a lip, says only this,
" It is true that you are born, but how were you conceived? "

There is an owl upon an elder-tree,
Who opening an eye, says only this.
" That is a lovely child! "
The old World said again,
" Yes! but how was he conceived? "

There is a gust of free wind,
And high cloud voices call.
" What can you ask of Love but conception?
Men are born of blest love,
Of evil love is death.
There is but one pure love, the love of Child,
And that is sweet as a pine forest, clean as the sea:
Old World take all your children in."

THE TOWN DIRGE

A CHILD was dead in the town,
Son of a sick woman and a poor man.
The woman being sick gave only her love,
And what can the poor man give!
A child was dead in the town.

In the house of our pity
The woman kept for her child.
But we, being wise, whispered apart,
" Seeing that the man is poor, and the woman sick,
It is well that the child is dead."

She, of her courtesy, asked us to look at her child,
But I could not enter the poor room,
I could not face its Dead.
My heart accused my lips and cried,
" No child should die."

O, you! Who are strong in the town,
Mighty to build, mighty to shield the weak,
Join with us that we may say,
Under God's grace, and of our good care,
No child shall die.

THE SONG OF THE CHILD

RECEIVE me again, Father God,
There is no room!
There is war upon earth, men fight,
They have no time, no food, no pity for babes.
The women staunch men's wounds, and forget us.
Mothers with child are starved.
The new-born dies at the empty breast;
So I died who was your messenger.
I have made no beauty, I have spoken no truth,
I have failed, I was rejected, born too soon.
Receive me again! Father God! Receive me!

THEFT

WHEN first I saw the old man dead,
I laid a curious hand upon his head,
To steal that little left in the soul's mould,
The knowledge of the rigour and the cold.
I asked no pardon of the Clay,
For the dead eyes had wandered in their day.
And kneeling ceremonious at his side,
I found a book he'd dropt the day he died,
Verses—which I repeated to dead ears in lieu of prayers.
I stole the book, regardless of his heirs,
Asking no pardon of the Clay,
For the dead man had loved me in his day.

MATER DOLOROSA

THE Mother of Mercy in sorrow wise
Looks at our wounds with her kind eyes,
Heals with her look, as the great scathless can;
In every man she sees a child, in every child a man.

Lo! her great spirit leaves the holy height,
Swoops to the depths where old Sin lies at night,
And the grey head to her good breast she takes,
And kisses lips that curse before the worn child wakes.

She, mortal woman, knew the stress of birth,
In a frail child she bore the King of Earth.
The eternal symbol of our faith she stands
Who put all hope into our Children's hands,

Mother of Mercy, in sorrow wise,
Look at our life with your kind eyes,
Charm our dull sight, as your sweet pity can,
To see in every man a child, in every child a man.

SOLITARY

WHEN love is over, are we most alone.
When hearths are black, there is the cold of stone.
I rise from my bed and walk the dismal night,
Weeping, I seek alone my ultimate right.

The warmth and cheer of Love is but a lure,
By which the blood is cheated to endure.
To each man is a path, by other feet untrod,
Which leads him, lonely, to the hill of God.

On God's cold hill, there is a holy height,
Where splendid fires descend to man at night:
On the cold traveller falls the livening breath,
To raise him high in life, and proud in death.

GOD, I AM BROKEN

God, I am broken, broken,
I have nothing left but my tears.
These are the wealth I have gathered
Through my tempestuous years.

I have trusted Life,
I have leaned on Love,
I have gone from hope to hope, in vain,
From Love I have known the chill of death,
From Life I have won the prize of pain,
And hope is not.

God, give me courage, send me again my pride,
Put forth Thy mighty Hand
And leave me on a bare hill-side,
Let me know the hail and the rain-storm
And the stress of warring wind,
Let me bathe my soul in silence
And forget that I have sinned.

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